

Bell To Toll At AVM To Honor Warriors

By Cheryl Conway

The bells will be ringing at the All Veterans Memorial in Budd Lake come September with the unveiling of a newly designed one-of-a kind bell tower. The historical unveiling and dedication of the POW/MIA/PTSD Ascension Bell Tower is set to be held Saturday, Sept. 5, 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m., at the AVM grounds, which is located at the front of Turkey Brook Park. Sponsored by the All Veterans Alliance Board of Directors and Morris County American Legion, the event will also be live streamed from the AVM's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AllVeteransMemorialMountOlive>

Since its formation in 2008, new elements are continuously being added to the AVM- New Jersey's premier ceremonial grounds that captures the nation's rich history, service and patriotism honoring those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Ascension Bell rings in as the 11th element and will carry significant purpose in remembering soldiers.

"The bell tower's value is immeasurable with many purposes," says AVM Founder Charlie Wood Uhrmann. "It is a promise kept. Like our POW/MIA World Globe, the Ascension Bell Tower will be formally used during our National POW/MIA 24 Vigil Ceremony.

"Each year, we call out the name, rank and war served of N.J.'s POW/MIA's," explains Uhrmann. "After each POW/MIA name is read, the bell will be tolled. Last year as we read the names, we placed a replicated dog tag donning the name, rank, branch of service and documented date the warrior was captured or went missing, onto the POW/MIA/PTSD Remembrance Wall. The impact of that display has ignited various responses from the community."

As the originator of the AVM, Uhrmann is the mastermind behind each of the elements, funding each personally or through donations for the non-profit memorial site. The Ascension Bell Tower is her latest design which took her years to conceptualize.

Founding Of The Bell

"The bell tower is an exclusive design of the All Veterans Memorial; I designed the bell and commissioned artist/metal craftsman Timothy Sheldon to build it," says Uhrmann. "Tim will have a video showing the making of the bell at the event for all to see. All of the elements have been registered with the U.S. Library of Congress; including the Ascension Bell Tower," which will stand 11" high and is 52"x52" square made of stainless steel.

“It has taken me a couple of years to come up with a design,” says Uhrmann. “I initially entertained installing a common rounded bell – but always stopped short – feeling as if it had little to no impact or fit. The four-sided bell itself will hang from underneath the guard’s shed. The bell has four sides; the original POW/MIA logo, POW, MIA, and PTSD; each one has its own unique pitch or tone. Tim and I have been working on the size and engineering of the design since January.” Other elements at the AVM include: 1. The Mt. Olive War Monument; 2. Charles Johnson Gazebo; 3. Path to Enduring Freedom; 4. War Dog Memorial; 5. NorthStar Seating; 6. Bill of Rights (Liberty) Wall; 7. Battleship NJ Bollards; 8. Warrior Obelisk; 9. Spiritual Cenotaph; 10. POW/MIA/PTSD Remembrance Wall. The Ascension Bell Tower will be placed at the left corner behind the POW/MIA/PTSD Remembrance Wall, Explains Uhrmann.

“It will be overlooking the prison mural,” says Uhrmann. “The bell tower is a replica of a universal prison guard tower. It is featured in the background of the POW/MIA logo, which was originally designed by Newt Heisley Rivkees who was very sympathetic to the POW/MIA issue. Heisley designed a flag to represent our missing warriors; following approval by the League's Board of Directors at a meeting held January 22-23, 1972.

“Though there has been minor changes to the logo over the years, we used the original designed that was submitted and accepted by the National League of POW/MIA Families and the passage by the 105th Congress of Section 1082 of the 1998 Defense Authorization Act,” she continues. “The Bell Tower is a symbol of a promise our nation made to those who were either prisoner of war or missing in action that they would not be forgotten.”

Financing for the Ascension Bell Tower was jointly funded by Uhrmann through her non-profit organization All Veterans Alliance and the Morris County American Legion, which was Amery Vasso’s Commander’s Project. Uhrmann’s AVA also contributed to the design, engineering and installation of the tower.

Itinerary Planned

At 11:30 a.m., Veteran Support Groups have been invited to offer any outreach services to veterans who have not had access to necessary medical attention due to COVID-19, explains Uhrmann.

Opening ceremonies will begin at 1 p.m. featuring the Rolling Thunder and Legion Riders.

“The motorcycle groups will loop the park once, then enter onto the All Veterans Memorial grounds,” explains Uhrmann. “They will create a barrier around the perimeter holding POW/MIA flags. Upon the arrival and raising of the last POW/MIA Flag, the ceremony will begin. It should be an amazing display!”

At 1:15 p.m., service pavers will be installed by private individuals; at 1:30 p.m. donors and volunteers will be recognized.

“We will be recognizing those who supported us in our outreach efforts i.e. Helping Homeless Heroes etc. – such as Budd Lake Boys Scout Troop 249, Mt. Olive High School JROTC Air Force and various American Legions,” says Uhrmann.

“Our featured guest(s) will be Vietnam Veterans, as they were instrumental implementing the POW/MIA movement and the return /re-designation of our K-9 warriors,” she adds.

At 1:45 p.m., the POW/MIA/PTSD Ascension Bell Tower will be unveiled and dedicated.

With social distancing still being mandated in N.J., Uhrmann is ready to comply.

“We are an outdoor complex,” says Uhrmann. “We will remain cognizant of the social distancing mandates set forth by N.J. Governor Phil Murphy. We plan to encourage 6 ft. distancing when possible, provide hand sanitizers and have available neck gaiters and face masks.”

As Uhrmann prepares the unveiling of the latest element to the AVM- the bell tower- she already has the next element in the back of her saddle.

“Coming soon will be a life size monument of George Washington’s horse when he crossed the Delaware River – “Blueskin,” Uhrmann shares. “Blueskin will represent all the horses that fought and perished during battle.”